Joining the Nazi Party

Explaining the Political Geography of NSDAP Membership, 1925-1933

BRIAN AULT
Concordia University–St. Paul
WILLIAM BRUSTEIN
University of Minnesota

The relative strength of competing explanations of Nazism is examined by using a sample of Nationalist Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP) members joining from 1925 to 1933, culled from the Berlin Document Center. Results of a national multivariate model, regressing NSDAP membership rate at the Kreise (county) level on key indicators of competing theories, lends support to what recent analysts have concluded about the Nazi electorate. The NSDAP is best characterized as a catchall party with strongest membership support found in Bavaria and Northwest Germany. Tests for spatial autocorrelation reveal spatial clustering. A spatial-effects model is estimated and results support the political-confessionalism thesis, with mass-society and lower-middle-class explanations invalidated. The spatial lag term is significant, which may represent the importance of preexisting networks to Nazi mobilization and the likelihood that the joining process was one of hierarchical diffusion. Finally, results from regional models emphasize the varied political geography of Nazi membership.

The sociology of Nazism has captivated scholars for more than half a century. The who and why of Nazism still remain subject of considerable debate, as the strength of competing theoretical explanations are assessed. The principal kinds of evidence advanced in support of these explanations are voting results and studies of Nationalist Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP) membership. Of course, the latter are scant in proportion to the number of analyses devoted to the NSDAP electorate. The inability to collect and analyze Nazi Party membership data is perhaps the primary explanation for the failure of scholars to distinguish between the motivations for voting for, and joining, the NSDAP. Do the theories proffered to explain voting behavior apply to those individuals actually joining the party?[1] Using a unique sample of individuals joining the

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Authors' Note: *Please direct all correspondence to Brian Ault, Department of Social & Behavioral Science, Concordia University-AD 3, 275 North Syndicate Street, St. Paul, MN 55104; e-mail: Arthur.B.Ault-1@tc.umn.edu*

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Nazi Party between 1925 and 1933, drawn from the NSDAP master file at the Berlin Document Center (BDC), we are able to examine the relative strength of extant theoretical explanations, in the context of those joining the NSDAP during this period.

Before turning to the specifics of our analysis, a brief overview of the competing explanations of the sociology of joining the Nazi movement is presented.

COMPETING EXPLANATIONS OF NAZISM

There are now five explanations that have been employed to explain the Nazi phenomenon: mass society, lower-middle-class reaction, political confessionalism, catchall protest party, and economic self-interest (O'Loughlin, Flint, & Anselin, 1994). We will take each of the five in chronological turn. It bears reiterating that the testing of these explanations has been almost exclusively in the context of voting.

MASS SOCIETY

After World War II scholars naturally chose to emphasize the irrationalist nature of what had just been witnessed. The irrationalist appeal is that individuals and institutions act on deep and frequently unaccountable impulses uninfluenced by critical judgment (Rule, 1988, p. 93). This appeal found favor as an explanation for the kinds of individuals attracted to the NSDAP, the motivations of its supporters, the programmatic appeal of the Nazi Party, and the general political and social climate of Weimar Germany. The "mass society" theory of political behavior drew on the earlier works of Tarde, Sighele, Le Bon, and Pareto.

Mass-society theorists like Arendt (1961), Bendix (1953), Kornhauser (1959), Lederer (1940), and Ortega (1932) focused on the irrational, anti-intellectual, and visceral nature of the Nazi appeal to mass men/women. Underlying this thesis is the Durkheimian notion that modernization has intensified the anomic character of society by depriving the uprooted masses of traditional and communal moorings. For Bendix (1953) and Kornhauser (1959), those most vulnerable to the irrationalist appeal are the victims of societal atomization (usually young urban dwellers). In addition, this view posits that social isolation and anomie should increase in times of severe political and economic crises. Regarding Weimar Germany, proponents of the mass-society thesis see a connection between the rise of National Socialism and the defeat of Germany in World War I, the unfinished revolution of 1918-1919, the hyperinflation of 1922-1923, the agrarian crisis of the years 1927-1929, and the onset of the Great Depression in 1929.

LOWER-MIDDLE-CLASS REACTION

The lower-class theory of fascism holds that interwar European fascism was a reaction of the lower-middle class (independent artisans, shopkeepers, farmers, and white-collar employees) to the growing influence of big labor and big business. In the aftermath of the war, the lower-middle-class theory of Nazism caught on with a large group of scholars, most noticeably S. M. Lipset. Lipset (1981) posited that associated with every social stratum related to left-center-right political ideology was an extremist form of political expression: Communism or Peronism in the working class, traditional authoritarianism in the upper class, and fascism in the lower-middle class.

Proponents of this thesis claim that the strain from the processes of concentration and centralization of production resulting from the late-19th- and early-20th-century modernization in Germany was responsible for the German lower-middle-class' embrace of Nazism. The lower-middle class had lost confidence in the ability of its traditional political parties to defend its interests against big business and labor. The lower-middle class turned to the Nazi Party in the belief that the party would reinstate the class to a favorable social, economic, and political position in German society.

POLITICAL CONFESSIONALISM

Although many lower-middle-class individuals supported the NSDAP in one way or another, not all from this stratum went over to the Nazis. Why some in the lower-middle class turned to Nazism, whereas others eschewed such affiliation formed the basis of Burnham's (1972) important article on political immunization and political confessionalism. For Burnham, lower-middle-class grievances were necessary but insufficient to explain electoral support for the Nazi Party. In Burnham's view, in times of social and economic instability social groups deprived of a political church are likely to become prey of extreme right-wing or left-wing movements. Burnham combined elements of the mass-society and lower-class theses. Like the mass-society theorists, Burnham proposes that people lacking social ties are most prone to political extremism. Like Lipset, Burnham sees a particular lower-middle-class propensity for Nazism. For Burnham, however, the German lower-middle class fell to the Nazis because the class lacked a preexisting political church that might have armed it with social integration and regulation, thus sheltering it from the Nazi virus.

The political-confessionalism thesis offers one explanation for the oft-stated claim that German Catholics and many German workers remained immune to the Nazi appeal. By this logic, the Catholic Center Party and the Social Democrats (SPD), the two principal political churches for Catholics and laborers, sheltered their followers from extremist contagion by wrapping members into a densely knit network of formal and informal organizations. When Germany became victimized by the severe crises of the 1920s and 1930s, German Catholics and many workers remained active adherents of their respective political churches. Conversely, middle-class Protestants traditionally aligning with liberal parties like the German People's Party (DVP) or the German Democratic Party (DDP)—parties that lacked the pull that the Center Party or SPD had—were cast adrift. The political-confessionalism thesis hypothesizes that in times of crises, German middle-class Protestants were more likely to abandon their parties than were German Catholics or German workers.

CATCHALL PROTEST PARTY

The fourth explanation has been arrived at as a result of various electoral studies and in critique of the three explanations discussed so far. Empirical research has shown electoral support for the NSDAP deriving from a range of social classes or strata, not concentrated primarily in one place. Scholars such as Hamilton (1982), Childers (1983), and Falter (1990) pronounced the mass-society and lower-class explanations as disproved on the basis of data analysis. In addition, studies of NSDAP membership lend credence to the catchall thesis (Brustein, 1996; Brustein & Falter, 1994, 1995; Kater, 1983; Madden, 1987). Of course, there is no explicit theory advanced to explain why there was such widespread support. The analyses conclude by theoretically maintaining that such disparate support is evidence of wholesale protest on the part of German voters, in response to the ineptitude of the Weimar political structure.

RATIONAL ECONOMIC SELF-INTEREST

The most recent explanation, that of rational economic self-interest does not so much negate the catchall thesis as it provides more explicit theoretical and historical explanations for why certain subpopulations would have been rationally drawn to the party, given their material self-interest. The NSDAP support was of a catchall nature, but individuals did not vote or join solely on the basis of protest.

Abraham's (1986) detailed examination of economic sectors within Weimar Germany provides the first, albeit delimited, economic self-interest explanation. In studying the profitability and economic viability of certain economic sectors and particular industries, Abraham was able to proffer a plausible connection between individuals' occupational locus within weak/strong sectors and their potential support for the NSDAP.

Brustein has expanded greatly on this logic and has provided a much fuller rational choice theoretical base for catchall support (Brustein, 1990, 1996; Brustein & Ault, 1993; Brustein & Falter, 1994). Individuals' political preferences largely reflect their material interests as determined by their calculation of the benefits and costs associated with support of given political parties. They select the political party or program that they perceive will provide them with the greatest benefits. In the context of pre-1933 Weimar, those voting for and joining the NSDAP calculated that the expected benefits of such action would exceed their expected costs. This decision was shaped by the "mode of production," or economic context that they found themselves in.

In an urban context, akin to Abraham, Brustein posits that blue-collar workers in specific domestic-oriented sectors of the industrial economy (e.g., construction or food production) would have found the Nazi economic platform more appealing than would their counterparts in a dynamic sector (e.g., those engaged in electrotechnical or chemical production). A fuller illustration is provided for an agricultural mode of production. Given the heterogeneity of interests within the German old middle class, not every group of the old middle class was equally inclined to vote for the Nazi Party. The NSDAP should have obtained stronger support from livestock farming communities than from nonlivestock farming communities. In addition, those livestock farming communities with higher levels of indebtedness should have been more prone to Nazism than those with lower debt levels. By forcefully advocating economic protectionism, resettlement, impartible inheritance, and tax relief while attacking Weimar policies on reparations and subsidies to large East German grain growers, the NSDAP programs more closely responded to the interests of German livestock farmers. In sum, the catchall nature of the party was as much a function of action based on material self-interest as it was a reactionary protest against the inadequacies of other parties.

DATA, METHOD, AND FINDINGS

Until recently there have been only two national studies of NSDAP membership covering the period before Hitler seized power in 1933. The Kater (1983) and Madden (1987) studies of NSDAP membership have contributed to our understanding of the social composition of the Nazi Party. However, they are only descriptive and, more important, contain shortcomings that may well render their findings problematic.

Kater's study relied on a sample of roughly 18,000 NSDAP individuals who joined between 1925 and 1945. Because nine tenths of all Nazi Party members joined the party only after 1933 and because Kater drew a strictly proportional sample of NSDAP membership records, his sample includes less than 2,000 cases for the period 1930 to 1932, and less than 100 cases for the early years, 1925 to 1927.

Like Kater, Madden drew a sample of NSDAP membership from the BDC's NSDAP master file. However, unlike Kater, who sampled membership cards across the entire German alphabet (the nearly 11 million membership cards are arranged alphabetically by surname), Madden sampled single letters for the period 1925 to 1930. Given the pronounced regional clustering of names in Germany, his sampling method likely biased his sample with regard to region, confession, occupation, date of entry, and so forth. In sum, although these two studies were useful in beginning to sketch the composition of NSDAP members, their conclusions were based on samples that were not highly representative of the party rank and file.

The sample of Nazi Party membership used in this article also comes from the NSDAP official master file housed in the BDC. Actually, the Nazi Party's official membership files consist of two comprehensive membership files: one originally arranged alphabetically by surname and the other originally arranged geographically by Nazi *Gau* (Nazi German administrative unit). For the purposes of judicial investigation after World War II, unfortunately the latter file was rearranged alphabetically. About 90 percent of the membership files have survived World War II. The membership cards are stored in roughly 5,000 boxes in the BDC. Each membership card contains information on a member's last name, first name, gender (via first name), date of party entry, date of party withdrawal, date of party reentry, birthplace and birthdate, place of residence (and subsequent residences), local and regional party chapter, party number, family status, and last but not least, occupation.

From these files two different samples were drawn (for more specific sampling information, see Schneider-Haase, 1991). In the first sample, a proportional two-stage sample was drawn for the years 1925 to 1933, with more than 27,000 cases, using both membership files (i.e., the alphabetically and the formerly geographically arranged files). The primary goal was to assess the growth of the party during the period 1925 to 1933. The secondary goal was to gather the necessary information to properly weight this larger, disproportionate sample to be able to generalize to the whole 1925-1933 period. The second sample contains about 42,000 cases, again from both files. It is a stratified random sample, stratified by year to get enough cases for each year of entry, including the years 1925 to 1928, when the party was minuscule. In sum, the second sample, that which we use for this article, contains nearly 3,000 cases for each of the early years and roughly 8,000 cases for each of the years 1930 to 1932.

Unfortunately, the membership cards include no information on a member's religion, formal education, social class or status, or union membership. However, during a 3-year effort, occupations were coded according to several occupational and status-oriented schemes of categorization and the membership data were combined via place of residence and birthplace with two Weimar election data sets (the Weimar Republic County Data Collection or WRCD) on a community and county level established earlier by Jürgen Falter.

The final sample thus has contextual variables such as confessional, occupational and economic structure of locality, political traditions, unemployment figures, city size, region, geographic location, and so forth, in addition to membership information. It is our purpose to extend the discussion of Nazi membership a bit further by using a more complex multivariate spatial regression model to adjudicate between measurable indicators of each of the competing models, as they seek to explain the political geography of Nazi Party membership.

Because the WRCD contextual variables are available at an aggregate *Kreis* (county-town) level, it was necessary to create a membership ratio per Kreis to use as our dependent variable for the regression analyses. With Kreis and date of entry designated for each member in our large member file ($N = 42{,}004$), we were able to aggregate the number of individuals joining the party between 1925 and 1933 by this unit of analysis.[2] This aggregate number of members was then appended to a separate WRCD file containing the array of contextual variables (from both the 1925 and 1933 *Statistik des Deutschen Reichs*) at the same Kreis designation (supplied by Jürgen Falter).

A ratio was computed for each Kreis defining the number of members per 1,000 eligible voters for the July 1932 election. Eligible voters were chosen instead of population as the base, given the similar age requirements (age 18) for voting and becoming a party member. We do not have an age-specific breakdown for the general Kreis population in our array of contextual variables. Furthermore, we had to merge agricultural census data onto this file. These data provided the total area (hectares) of each Kreis devoted to farming, and within farming, the amount of land used for *Acker* (large grain) and *Wiese und Weder* (livestock farming). The latter distinction between large grain and livestock farming is crucial as an indicator of Brustein's economic self-interest explanation.

Given the full array of contextual variables at our disposal, we then selected those variables that best represented adequate indicators of the aforementioned five theoretical explanations of participating in Nazism. We use a multivariate modeling process given the multidimensional reality of an individual's choice to join the party (Brustein, 1996; Falter, 1990, 1991). Religion, occupation, class, and so forth are simultaneously active in an individual's calculus; hence, they should all be entered into one regression equation.

The following variables (and their hypothesized relationships with membership rate) were chosen as indicators of the extant theories of Nazism:

MASS SOCIETY

1. LNPOP (+): The natural log (due to skew) of the proportion of 1933 population to total land area in hectares. This is a crude measure of population density. The higher the population density, the more atomized and less integrated people are, making them more prone to Nazi recruitment.
2. UNEMP (+): Unemployment rate for 1933. The higher the unemployment rate, the greater the likelihood individuals will experience alienation and anomie, and the greater the attraction of Nazism.
3. AGRIC (–): The proportion of total land area in a Kreis (1933) that is devoted to farming. This is a crude measure of urbanization. The more urbanized a community is, the less integrated individuals are in that community, making them more prone to Nazism.

LOWER-MIDDLE-CLASS REACTION

1. SELF (+): The proportion of those gainfully employed in 1933 with the occupational designation of "self-employed." The greater the proportion of self-

employed in a community, the greater the strains on these lower-middle-class groups because of rapid German modernization, and the greater the chance that they will express these strains politically via Fascist extremism.

2. BCTRADES (+): The proportion of those gainfully employed in 1925 with the occupational designation of "worker in trade and transport."[3] Unlike industrialized blue-collar workers, blue-collar workers in skilled trades share similar political concerns and orientation as those who were self-employed.

POLITICAL CONFESSIONALISM

1. PROPROT (+): The proportion of Kreis population that was Protestant in 1925 (see Note 3). The higher the proportion of Protestants in a community, the less politically "churched" the community, making it more vulnerable to Nazism.
2. INDUST (–): The proportion of all gainfully employed who were employed in industry in 1933. The more industrial a community was, the more it would find a political "church" on the Left (i.e., the SPD, the German Communist Party, or KPD, etc.).

CATCHALL PROTEST PARTY

There really are no unique variables to represent this explanation. Instead, the empirical findings should show more than one stratum or class represented, for example, workers and self-employed joining.

RATIONAL ECONOMIC SELF-INTEREST

Unfortunately, our data disallow the creation of indicators for the urban context mentioned above, that is, blue-collar workers in stagnant industrial sectors; hence, we are left at this point only with an indicator of the agricultural mode of production.

1. DAIRYFAR (+): The proportion of all farmland in a Kreis (1933) devoted to Wiese und Weder, that is, a measure of land used for dairy and livestock farming. The higher the proportion of dairy and livestock farming in a community, the greater the likelihood that farmers would have found it in their material best interest to join the Nazis.

Spatial heterogeneity related to regional differentiation will be captured through the incorporation of five regional dummies, conforming to the analytic division of Weimar Germany, based on "cultural and historical characteristics found in O'Loughlin et al. (1994, p. 355):

Region 1: Prussia, East Prussia, Brandenburg, Silesia, and Berlin (reference category)
Region 2: Saxony and Thuringia
Region 3: Schleswig-Holstein, Lower Saxony, and Oldenburg
Region 4: Westphalia, Rhineland, Hesse, and Pfalz
Region 5: Bavaria
Region 6: Baden and Württemberg.

TABLE 1: National OLS[a] Model for NSDAP[b] Membership Rate (N = 743)

Variable	*Metric Coefficient*	*Z-Value*	*Probability*
UNEMP	0.87	2.12	.03
SELF	0.46	0.83	.40
BCTRADES	1.20	1.61	.11
PROPROT	0.44	10.31	.00
INDUST	–0.48	–2.20	.04
DAIRYFAR	0.20	2.12	.03
AGRIC	0.12	1.26	.21
LNPOP	0.00	0.15	.88
Region 2	0.02	0.57	.57
Region 3	0.30	5.38	.00
Region 4	0.04	0.94	.35
Region 5	0.28	5.27	.00
Region 6	0.02	0.41	.68
Constant	–0.08	–0.40	.69

NOTE: See text for an explanation of variables. Adjusted R^2 = .24; F = 18.72 (.000).
a. OLS = ordinary least squares.
b. NSDAP = Nationalist Socialist German Workers' Party.

The final merged file consists of 743 Kreise for which membership could be aggregated. Some of these Kreise had missing socioeconomic data and variable averages were spread to those cases. Table 1 presents ordinary least squares (OLS) regression results for a national model.[4]

From these OLS results it appears that in the context of membership, as recent analysts of the Nazi electorate have pointed out, the NSDAP is best characterized as a catchall party, given that communities with higher levels of blue-collar workers in trade and transport as well as communities with higher levels of dairy and livestock farming (old middle class) show statistically significant higher NSDAP membership rates (about .10 level of significance or less). These results also seem to invalidate the mass-society thesis. The unemployment indicator is statistically significant and positive, but the population density and ruralization indicators are not, with the latter having a positive relationship (should be negative). The lower-middle-class (LMC) explanation receives very minimal support, with proportion blue-collar workers in trade and transport positively related but of marginal statistical significance. The proportion of workers who are self-employed, the cornerstone of the LMC thesis, is positive but not statistically significant.

Burnham's political-confessionalism thesis receives the strongest statistical support from this analysis, given the combined explanatory weight of the indicators for Protestantism and workers in industry. Brustein's indicator for dairy and livestock farming is positive and so is the unemployment indicator, which taken together with a positive indicator for the urban/rural distinction (albeit not statistically significant) may provide empirical credence to the material interest model's focus on localized agricultural modes of production whose farming base is small-to-medium dairy and livestock farms. Unemployment, as an added stressor in these areas, exacerbated disaffection with the inept Weimar political structure.

Finally, the regional dummies reveal spatial heterogeneity in the political geography of NSDAP membership, with Region 3 (Northwest Germany: Schleswig-Holstein and Lower Saxony) and Region 5 (Bavaria) statistically significant. This accords with the historical record for the NSDAP, because it originated in Bavaria and attracted a tremendous regional backing in the northwest. Through the use of Atlas Geographic Information Systems software, the mapping of membership rate by German Kreise was produced (see Figure 1).

From this map we see the geographic pockets of high membership rates, Bavaria in the South and in the far northwest (particularly the area of Schleswig-Holstein). The mapping provides a visual summary to the historical record and these OLS regional results. However, given this spatial patterning, there is a possible statistical problem with OLS regression modeling that carries theoretical ramifications, in that a diffusion model for joining the Nazi Party, based on either interpersonal influence (Hamilton, 1996) and/or ideological engulfment (Kim & Bearman, 1997), may be operative.

Doreian (1981, 1980) has pointed out that regression analysis of data for geographic units may violate the assumption of independent errors (spatial autocorrelation). The membership dynamics in one county may well be the source of the membership level in a geographically adjacent county (i.e., spatial dependence), irrespective of the identified explanatory set of relevant sociological indicators (see also Anselin & Griffith, 1988; Fotheringham & Rogerson, 1993; Land & Deane, 1992; Land, Deane, & Blau, 1991).

Anselin's (1995) SPACESTAT software (Version 1.80) allows for the generation of descriptive spatial statistics capable of assessing whether or not there is spatial autocorrelation in a given variable. One of the most common spatial statistics used by geographers is Moran's I. Using SPACESTAT, we have generated Moran's I (Table 2) for two measures of spatial dependence in the German Kreise: first-order shared boundary contiguity and second-order boundary contiguity (a unit is first-order contiguous to another unit that is first-order contiguous to the observation in question).

Moran's I is defined as:

$$I = N/S_0 \Sigma_i \Sigma_j W_{ij} \bullet (X_i - \mu) \bullet (X_j - \mu) / \Sigma_i (x_i - \mu)^2$$

where N is the number of observations, W_{ij} is the element in the spatial weights matrix corresponding to the observation pair i, j, X_i, and X_j are observations for locations i and j (with mean μ), and S_0 is a scaling constant,

$$S_0 = \Sigma_i \Sigma_j W_{ij} \text{ i.e., the sum of all weights.}$$

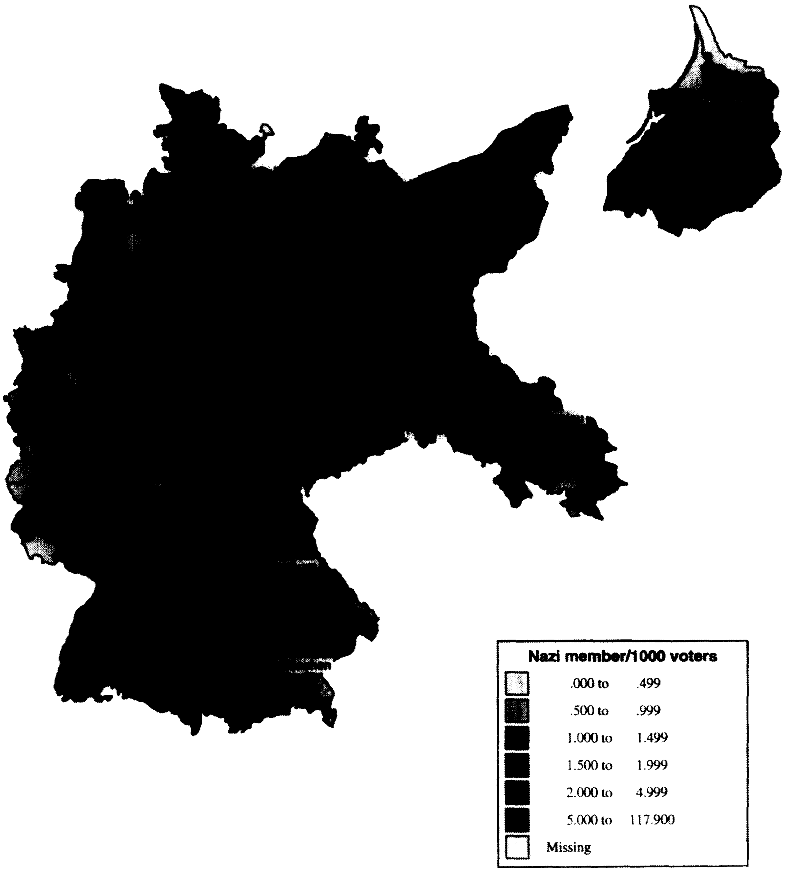

Figure 1: Spatial Distribution of Nazi Membership (1925-1933)—Number of Members per 1,000 Eligible Voters[a]

SOURCE: Brustein-Falter Berlin Document Center (BDC) Sample.

a. July 1932 election: German *Kreise* (counties).

Moran's I is similar but not equivalent to a correlation coefficient and is not centered around 0. In fact, the theoretical mean of Moran's I is $-1/N - 1$. In other words, the expected value is negative and is only a function of the sample size (N). (Anselin, 1995, p. 22-1)

If Moran's I is larger than the expected value, it is an indication of positive spatial autocorrelation and if less, an indication of negative spatial autocorrelation.

Table 2 reveals that NSDAP membership rate exhibits positive spatial autocorrelation.[5] The positive Moran coefficients support a diffusion model but this

TABLE 2: Moran's I for Spatial Autocorrelation—NSDAP[a] Membership Rate

Dependence Type	I	*Z-Value*	*Probability*
First-order boundary contiguous	.25	9.79	.000
Second-order boundary contiguous	.16	9.86	.000

a. NSDAP = Nationalist Socialist German Workers' Party.

is only a first step. Similar NSDAP membership rates are more spatially clustered than would be expected just by chance. This is problematic for OLS regression results from a measurement standpoint given the OLS assumption of independent errors. What kind of multivariate model is needed?

Doreian, following Ord's (1975) seminal development of two regression models for spatial interaction, defines a "spatial-disturbances" model as one where errors are correlated across the spatial units due to the influence of unmeasured variables not in the model. A "spatial-effects" model, on the other hand, captures spatial dynamics for the dependent variable not represented by the set of independent variables already in the model. The determination of which model to use, however, is one that should be driven by theoretical and substantive concerns. In this application one could make the case that both models may be operative. Spatial disturbances are possible in light of the fact that we do not have measures for all theoretically relevant variables with inherent spatial patterns, especially those of a constructivist type, for example, strength of a Nazi collective identity (nationalism), depth of emotion generated by Hitler's charisma and oratorical flair, fear of violence, and so forth.

On the basis of theoretical and historical criteria, we have decided on the spatial-effects model, generating a spatial-effects coefficient in addition to the other standard regression coefficients for the explanatory variables at hand. It is our belief that this model will provide a direct test for a diffusion model in the context of the material interest model's measures as well as religion.

A diffusion model of process is theoretically germane given that the NSDAP proselytized through preexisting networks (e.g., various agrarian organizations [Tilton, 1975]) and in the city via factory cells (Mai, 1996). Kim and Bearman (1997) have presented a formal theoretical model of collective action in rebellious regimes based on interpersonal influence, without the need to consider selective incentives. Rational actors voluntarily participate as a result of the structural effects of interactive persuasion generated by a centrally organized activist core linked to like-minded compatriots in what they call an "ideological envelope."

Although the NSDAP maintained centralized headquarters in Munich, local chapters were begun in key cities (e.g., Karlsruhe in Baden), which had the freedom to adapt mobilizing propaganda campaigns to local conditions. Micromobilization proceeded out from regional nodes to the more distant hinterlands (Orlow, 1969).

TABLE 3: 2SLS[a] Spatial-Effects Model for NSDAP[b] Membership Rate—Second-Order Boundary Contiguity ($N = 743$)

Variable	*Metric Coefficient*	*Z-Value*	*Probability*
NSDAP-MRP	0.28	1.63	.10
UNEMP	0.71	1.69	.09
SELF	0.45	0.81	.42
BCTRADES	0.90	1.18	.24
PROPROT	0.42	8.90	.00
INDUST	–0.46	–2.09	.04
DAIRYFAR	0.20	2.16	.03
AGRIC	0.07	0.77	.44
LNPOP	0.01	0.46	.64
Region 2	0.03	0.62	.54
Region 3	0.20	2.44	.01
Reigon 4	0.06	1.16	.25
Region 5	0.25	4.45	.00
Region 6	0.01	0.26	.80
Constant	–0.15	–0.76	.45
$R^2 = .25$.			

NOTE: See text for an explanation of variables.
a. 2SLS = two-stage least squares.
b. NSDAP = Nationalist Socialist German Workers' Party.

Concerning the mechanics of actually performing spatial analysis, there are at present two options. The specification of the spatial-effects regression model is as follows:

$$y = \rho W y + \beta X + \varepsilon$$

with $E[\varepsilon] = 0$ and $E[\varepsilon\varepsilon'] = \sigma_\varepsilon^2 \, I$ (Land & Deane, 1992, p. 224).

The first part of the equation on the right, ρWy, represents an $n \times n$ matrix W, whose elements describe the geographic proximity of sample units i and j. The spatial-effects parameter "ρ" measures the relationship between the value of y (membership rate) in a given geographic unit (Kreise) to the values of y in other proximate units. Unfortunately, OLS estimation of a spatial-effects model leads to biased and inconsistent parameter estimates (Land & Deane, 1992, p. 230).

Given this problem, both Land and Deane (1992) and Anselin (1988) have developed two-stage least squares estimators for spatial-effects parameters, the former using SAS, the latter using his own SPACESTAT software. The problem with Anselin's approach, heretofore, has been that it could only work with smaller sample sizes of 200 or less, given the size of the spatial weight matrix (W). Anselin (1995) recently released an updated version of his SPACESTAT software, designed to work with large data sets. We will use SPACESTAT (version 1.80) to perform the spatial-effects modeling of NSDAP membership rate.

Table 3 presents the results of applying Anselin's two-stage least squares (2SLS) technique (instrumental variables) using the second-order shared boundary contiguity matrix as the spatial weighting scheme. The spatial lag term will be called the NSDAP membership rate potential (NSDAP-MRP), following Land and Deane (1992), and is an estimate of the spatial effects of NSDAP membership rates in other Kreise on the membership rate in a given Kreis.

The results from Table 3 provide statistical support for a diffusion model of the NSDAP joining process. The NSDAP membership rate potential variable, that is, the spatial lag term, is statistically significant at the .10 level. After correcting the model estimation process for spatial autocorrelation, the political confessionalism thesis still receives the most statistical support with the mass-society thesis and lower-middle-class theses invalidated. Catholics and industrial workers, on average, stayed with their respective political churches, that is, the Center Party and the SPD/KPD. Brustein's dairy and livestock farming indicator maintains its explanatory position.

When the statistically significant factors from Table 3 are interpreted conjuncturally, they provide increased support for Brustein's material-interest model as it applies to an agrarian context. Protestant agricultural areas that emphasized dairy and livestock farming and that had sizable proportions of structurally related self-employed businessmen yield higher support for the Nazi Party. Individuals in these areas supporting the Nazi Party were farmers, self-employed artisans, and merchants who were interrelated in a particular and localized mode of production. Unemployment, as an added stressor, exacerbated disaffection with the inept Weimar political structure. The spatial-effects term may well represent the diffusion of the party into rural areas via the exploitation of preexisting *völkisch* (national-ethnic) and agrarian political organizations.

Alternative explanations for the underlying microdynamics of conducive structural loci have more to do with mobilization efforts at the local level—the effects of propaganda and matters of national identity, strength of organized resistance, the coercion/fear instigated by the Nazi storm troopers (SA), and so forth (Ault, 1997; Hamilton, 1982, 1996). These results keep Stage 1 of Brustein's (1996) material-interest model, the centrality and wholesale importance of material interest compatibility, still in question. The class and occupational measures are in a mix of explanatory factors, which include membership potential from contiguous Kreise, Protestantism, and regional specificities. Scholars like Fromm (1941) and Hamilton (1996), for example, explain the consistent empirical relationship between Protestantism and NSDAP support by identifying the social psychological conduciveness of German Protestantism to Nazism in the former to the lack of organizational resistance (vis-à-vis the German Catholic Church) of German Protestants in the latter. Ault (1997), echoing Merkl (1975), has identified nationalism and the emotions surrounding the effects of World War I on German men as critical in explaining the motivations for those joining the Nazi Party before 1930.

A recent study of the 1930 Nazi electorate (O'Loughlin et al., 1994) also calls for the inclusion of spatial heterogeneity and dependence in the regression modeling of voting. These scholars empirically show that there were unique regional differences in electoral support for the NSDAP in 1930 and that a single

TABLE 4: Regional Spatial Models—Metric Coefficients

	Regions of Germany					
Variable	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*
NSDAP-MRP	.29	0.17	0.44*	1.48**	–0.45	–0.66
PROPROT	.01	0.21**	0.35***	0.06***	1.50***	.01
SELF	.11	–0.26	5.80	–0.55	–2.01	–0.71
DAIRYFAR	.25	–0.24	0.20	–0.57	0.50**	–0.53*
AGRIC	.14	–0.39*	0.59	–0.15	–0.24	–0.18
UNEMP	–.78	–0.74	3.64	–0.51	–0.13	0.16
INDUST	.50	–0.38	–3.50	–0.97*	–0.60	–0.62
BCTRADES	.59	1.62	–1.83	–1.15	2.03	2.10
LNPOP	–.03	0.13**	0.08	0.14*	–0.14*	–0.01
Constant	.15	.56	-1.74	.23	1.08*	1.22*
R^2	.14	.19	.22	.00	.45	.10
N	174	143	79	112	121	114

NOTE: See text for an explanation of variables.
$^*p < .10$. $^{**}p < .01$. $^{***}p < .001$.

national-level model hinders more than it aids in revealing regional dynamics. They divide Germany into six regions based on cultural and historical characteristics (p. 355). Application of a model with indicators of the five explanations of support for Nazism reveals significant geographic variability. Unfortunately, a more specific discussion of the sociohistorical mechanisms underlying this uniqueness of "place" is not presented. Despite this, the realization that there are regional differences is very important and echoes what others have found throughout Europe (see, e.g., Brustein, 1988).

We decided to further assess the political geography of NSDAP membership by dividing our cases into the same six regions and analyze regional models for Region 1—Prussia, Silesia and East Prussia, Berlin and Brandenburg; Region 2—Saxony and Thuringia; Region 3—Northwest Germany, including Lower Saxony, Schleswig-Holstein, Hamburg, and Bremen; Region 4—Westfalen, Rhineland, Hesse, and Pfalz; Region 5—Bavaria; and Region 6—Baden and Württemburg (O'Loughlin et al., 1994, p. 355, Figure 1). The spatial regression model used at the national level is applied to each region. Table 4 presents the results of these regional models.

The results in Table 4 are inconclusive given the wide variation in fit across these six models. However, this table is suggestive of a regional diversity in explaining membership.

Region 3, for example, northwest Germany, is a region with considerable dairy and livestock farming. The direction of the relationship between variables for this region conforms to the economic mode of the production/material-interest model, and the significant variables (PROPROT and spatial term) may reveal the strength of Nazi infiltration into preexisting Protestant agrarian organizations.

In Region 5, Bavaria, the results show the strength of the Catholic Party (negative spatial term; a barrier to more widespread diffusion in the region), yet DAIRYFAR is also statistically significant, lending support for Brustein's material-interest emphasis.

In sum, these regional results lend credence to an assertion of a varying political geography of Nazi membership. Much more work needs to be done to fully confirm and precisely analyze these regional peculiarities.

CONCLUSION

Using a unique sample of NSDAP joiners from 1925 to 1933, we have been able to test the prevailing sociological explanations of Nazi support. So much of what research has been carried out on the NSDAP has been limited to its electorate, and membership is another form of very important political behavior. The larger social cost of joining the NSDAP in this period, and becoming individually identified with the party, necessitates scrutiny and a heightened level of research into this phenomenon. Toward this end we have offered a beginning.

Our analysis of a national regression model for membership points out that recent commentators espousing the NSDAP as a catchall party are indeed correct. What Brustein and Falter (1994) have shown via bivariate comparisons is corroborated by our regression findings. In addition, the mass-society and lower-middle-class explanations appear to receive the least support with regard to the bases of NSDAP support.

Burnham's political-confessionalism thesis is validated and is statistically the strongest. However, proponents of political confessionalism, who claim that German Protestants were more likely to become Nazis than German Catholics, have largely failed to explain the reasons for the overwhelming attachment of Germany's Protestant population to the Nazi Party. Why did Protestants turn to the Nazi Party rather than some other extremist movement? Might the strong relationship between Nazi membership and a region's religious confession result from underlying material interests? In particular, we may find that the close correspondence of Nazism and Protestantism is partly a product of a convergence between the substantive content of the Nazi Party program and the material interests of German Protestants. For instance, in many Catholic parts of Southern Germany, Hesse, and Rhineland-Westphalia, farmers had a particular problem with the Nazi proposal for a compulsory system of impartible inheritance. If implemented, this would have terminated the practice of partible inheritance that was in effect in much of the region and guaranteed by regional laws. Because many farmers' children counted on their portion of fixed and movable property as an inheritance, the Nazi pledge to eliminate partible inheritance did not elicit enthusiasm.

By contrast, many farmers in predominantly Protestant Schleswig-Holstein and Lower Saxony had no problem with the Nazi position on inheritance because impartible inheritance was already in practice there. Moreover, many of these farmers enthusiastically welcomed the fact that accompanying the Nazi policy on inheritance was the promise of a settlement program through which disinherited farmers' sons would receive land parcels in Eastern Germany. The settlement program offered young farmers the hope of owning a piece of land. In addition, the Protestant areas of Schleswig-Holstein were much closer to this land in the east than the southwestern Catholic regions, entailing a lower cost to relocation.

Although there were other impartible-inheritance areas in Germany, the Nazi settlement program had a special significance for the farmers of Northwestern Germany. Traditionally, in Germany's impartible-inheritance regions, the noninheriting children received a monetary compensation. However, in the economically depressed farming areas, older farmers did not have sufficient cash to pay off their younger sons. By promising to set aside land in Eastern Germany for the disinherited, the Nazi program offered both parents and children an appealing exit from their dilemma. That having been said, our analysis does reveal support for the economic self-interest argument, in the context of joining, even though it was not supported in the most recent electoral study (O'Loughlin et al., 1994).

The proportion of agricultural land devoted to dairy and livestock farming remains a consistently significant indicator (see Brustein & Ault, 1993). Moreover, if one thinks of the array of significant indicators in a conjunctural fashion, the idea of a particular agricultural mode of production being conducive to joining is borne out. However, regression techniques are rather static and disallow for any rigorous assessment of conjunctural causality, which the catchall and self-interest arguments clearly require. Ragin's (1987) Boolean method, for example, could possibly be used to meet this need, or perhaps event-history analysis, as they could better tie the timing of programmatic statements to specific cohorts entering or exiting the party.

Although suggestive, our findings do reveal regional differences and these must be fully elucidated. What exactly are the regionally specific nuances to joining the NSDAP? What other factors are at play? The easier task is to statistically show a varied geography. The more important and difficult task is to unearth the complex sociological patterns underlying such variability.

NOTES

1. We are aware that the acts of voting for the Nazi Party and joining the party before 1933 were qualitatively different. Membership in the Nazi Party clearly involved greater costs than vote casting. We can safely assume that many Nazi adherents decided against active membership because they believed that the personal costs were too high and the personal benefits too low. Hence, it is easy to understand why, all else being equal, more people support a party with votes than with membership. Nevertheless, we assume that the set of Nazi Party joiners constitutes a subset of Nazi Party voters.

2. We are indebted to Dr. Colin Flint, Georgia Tech University, for his able assistance in this process.

APPENDIX

TABLE A1: Summary Statistics ($N = 743$)

Variable	*M*	*SD*	*Minimum*	*Maximum*
MEMRATE[a]	.54	.39	.01	4.14
PROPROT	.60	.37	.00	6.99
DAIRYFAR	.31	.16	.01	1.00
SELF	.20	.04	.05	.32
AGRIC	.67	.16	.06	.99
INDUST	.24	.10	.09	.59
UNEMP	.11	.06	.02	.34
BCTRADES	.03	.02	.00	.16
LNPOP	.89	.75	–.34	6.63

NOTE: See text for an explanation of variables.
a. MEMRATE = membership rate.

TABLE A2: Zero-Order Matrix ($N = 743$)

	1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*
1. MEMRATE[a]	1								
2. PROPROT	.34	1							
3. DAIRYFAR	.06	–.21	1						
4. SELF	.00	–.27	.21	1					
5. AGRIC	.09	.10	–.18	–.06	1				
6. INDUST	–.07	.13	.01	–.54	–.17	1			
7. UNEMP	.02	.12	–.26	–.69	–.15	.55	1		
8. BCTRADES	.12	.13	–.06	–.31	–.02	.00	.33	1	
9. LNPOP	–.01	.00	–.11	–.40	.02	.58	.65	.33	1

NOTE: See text for an explanation of variables.
a. MEMRATE = membership rate.

3. Not available to us for 1933 on the files provided.

4. Summary statistics and zero-order correlations for all variables can be found in the appendix (Tables A1 and A2). There was no evidence of problematic multicollinearity when changes in t- values were assessed via stepwise regression.

5. Calculation of another spatial diagnostic, Geary's C, yielded corroborating conclusions.

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